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ABSTRACT

This research project developed a teaching model using museums for educational purposes. The research involved educational programs for children 9 to 11 years of age at the David M. Stewart Museum, near Montreal, Quebec, which specializes in the colonial history of Canada and Quebec. The study focused on the nature of museum visits, learning strategies, the preparation phase, the follow-up phase, the duration of the activity at the museum, and the intellectual skills used by student-visitors. The research tools employed formal and informal observation, formal and informal discussions, and cognitive and affective questionnaires containing closed and open questions. The teaching model for employing museum visits involved a four-step learning process: development of questions, data gathering, analysis, and synthesis. The project outlined the activities that researchers found effective with students to prepare them for a museum visit, while at the museum, and after the museum visit. A lengthy bibliography, consisting of both French and English language titles is included. (DB)

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The Museum and the School

(Work of the research group on education and museums)

Paper presented at the
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In recent years, working closely with school and museum authorities, we have completed an intensive research project to develop a teaching model for the use of museums for educational purposes.

We have founded for that purpose and directed since ten years a research group called the "Groupe de recherche sur l'éducation et les musées" (GREM) or the Research Group on Education and Museums. Gathering university's professors, M.A. and Ph.D. students, curators, educational officers, pedagogical advisers and teachers, our research group has slowly enlarged its field of investigation and research. In this paper, will not describe or summerize the entire work done, but we will try to draw some generalisations that may apply to every museums and schools.

But, we must understand that even if schools and museums existed since a long time (they are with the libraries, the oldest cultural institutions) and even if a lot of researches with, on and in the schools and the museums, have been done, very few have been conducted trying to link the school and the museum.

Recently, Terry Zeller, professor at the Northern Illinois University, has written: "The absence of clearly articulated theoretical base still haunts museum educators" (1989, p. 38). In 1932, Paul Marshall Rea, author of research granted by the Carnegie Foundation had said: "... few methods of juvenile museum education have become universal. There seems to be more interest in devising new small experiments than in the more prosaic work of extending to the whole field such methods as have been found most generally effective" (1932, p. 25).

In that context, we have tried to develop a pedagogical model for museums and schools.

We worked at many museums but more specially at the Musée David M. Stewart, which specializes in the colonial history of Canada and Quebec. The museum, which is located on Ile Sainte-Hélène between Montreal and Longueuil in the middle of the Saint Lawrence River, occupies a building erected in 1824 by the English army. It served in turn as a small fort, a barracks and a prison. History tells us that in 1760 the French General, Lévis, burned his flags on Ile Saint-Hélène rather than surrender them to the English invader. The museum was founded in 1955 by a wealthy philanthropist of Scottish descent, David M. Stewart, who focused it mainly on the French and then English colonization of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The museum has remained true to the orientation given it by its founder.

In cooperation with the Museum's management and a number of school boards, in particular the Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal, we have in recent years developed, tested and evaluated educational programs for children at the upper elementary level (9-11 years of age). The theme of the programs was the arrival and settlement of French colonists in the Saint Lawrence Valley in the 17th and 18th centuries. The programs involved a day-long activity at the museum. Each activity was preceded by a two-week preparatory phase in the classroom and completed by a two-week follow-up phase, again in the classroom.

The purpose of our research was to analyse in a school and museum context the four components of a pedagogical situation: purpose, subject, method and milieu. Each one was examined independently and in relationship to one another. Specifically, we focused on the nature of museum visits (traditional guided tour, interactive guided tour, visit with a personal guide and unaccompanied visit, etc.); on learning strategies (listening, observation, presentations, hands-on activities, role-playing, etc.); on the preparation phase (intensive preparation, abbreviated preparation); on the follow-up phase (intensive follow-up, abbreviated follow-up and absence of follow-up); on the duration of the activity at the museum (one day or two); and on the intellectual skills used by student-visitors.

In order to grasp reality in specific as well as general terms, we developed a variety of qualitative and quantitative information-gathering tools. They included formal and informal observation, formal and informal discussions, and cognitive and affective questionnaires containing closed and open questions. Without going into excessive detail, let me simply say that we had to develop and validate an observation grid for intellectual skills; a cognitive questionnaire dealing with facts, events, certain concepts (century and migration) as well as intellectual and technical skills; and, lastly, an affective questionnaire dealing with attitudes towards the museum and the social sciences. These different, complementary instruments enabled us to observe the progress of the educational program and the data we collected helped us analyse various factors and develop a preliminary synthesis.

This work led to similar studies in other museums with students at various levels. The results thus far obtained validate and reinforce our hypotheses and proposals.

I shall not describe in detail all the experiments and all their risks and difficulties, whether epistemological, methodological or operational. This information can be found in the study reports and literature. I will limit my comments today to pointing out the most striking similarities and differences among the various studies conducted to date. I will then outline some proposals which may become guidelines or working hypotheses. They are based on comparisons between the results obtained by the students in affective and intellectual pre-tests and post-tests that have been confirmed by formal and informal interviews given by various participants and by formal and informal observations developed by the researchers involved.

All the school groups who participated in our educational programs or in similar programs made significant progress at two levels: cognitive (facts, concepts, skills) and affective (attitudes to the museum). This is the first generalization we can deduce from the data which, as appropriate, were subjected to statistical or qualitative analysis. In other words, the museum can be a place of learning and development.

The results of the various types of visits to the museum also reveal that, for most of the groups involved, *the more the activities require active participation by the student-visitors, the greater the progress in terms of both the cognitive level and attitudes towards the museum.* As noted, all the student-visitors made progress. However, those who participated in an activity where they used a personal guide and had to reply individually or as part of a team to questions for which the answers could be found in the museum, obtained better results than those who were offered a traditional guided tour. The greater the student's involvement, the greater the progress.

We understand why the museum appears more interesting. But we must take care to ensure that the personal guide does not become the magic recipe, the gauge of certain success. There is no particular activity, in museum pedagogy or in pedagogy in general, that guarantees success. Experience has shown that absolute determinism does not exist in education. However, since there are no absolute rules, we must recognize the existence of trends that may give direction to thinking and organize action. It is in this sense that we must understand that more active participation by the student leads to better results. The type of visit selected, as well as the learning strategies and teaching methods used, should definitely take this trend into account. But they should also recognize the specific conditions in which they are being used. The layout of a museum, the age of the students and the skills of the instructors are all factors that influence choice. Thus, while some activities may lend themselves to student participation, the conditions in which they operate should also be taken into account.

Similarly, we have noted that students who participated in educational programs that included a follow-up phase to the museum visit made better progress in terms of both

cognitive skills and attitudes toward the museum than those who took part in programs with no follow-up component. Does this indicate symbiosis or complementarity between schools and museums? We are unable to answer this question with certainty.

Finally, a large majority of groups observed, show no significant change in attitude toward the school subject regardless of the type of visit and the type of preparation and follow-up.

Characteristics of educational programs

Analysis of the various educational programs we have developed, tested and evaluated reveals positive results in terms of the student-visitor. Let us examine some of the proposals we can make.

The Learning Process

Our research shows that museum visits can mean more to students than a moment of recreation or an end-of-year reward. It can also offer more than book knowledge. It can enable students to learn how to learn in the museum, a new learning environment. Learning how to learn enables students to build their own personal learning method. By providing them with the necessary tools they need to use the various educational methods available (exhibits, labels, displays, etc.) and by training them to "process" intellectually the various data, we can increase their understanding of the items displayed.

Museum visits can motivate students to begin a learning process similar to that followed quite naturally by a person doing research, in other words, seeking answers to one's own questions. That is the type of learning process favoured in the "curricula", especially in the social sciences. This process may be adapted to students of different ages.

This learning process, which draws on inductive reasoning, develops in a flexible and dynamic framework that requires student participation. It involves four steps: development of questions; data gathering; analysis; and synthesis.

The development of questions is the first step in the learning process. In this step, students are essentially invited to observe reality, question their own reactions, express their initial perceptions, ask questions and, as much as possible, develop hypotheses. The activity begins with a situation closely related to the student's interests and concerns. This in turn leads to questions. Since the students must become researchers, they must begin by defining a problem, a question. This question development phase takes place at school. In the classroom, students identify the questions they will try to answer at the museum and also prepare their approach to data gathering.

The second step of the process, data gathering, takes place at the museum. In this phase, students gather data and seek answers to their questions. At the museum, they can see and sometimes touch objects that reflect the realities of another environment or another time. This concrete aspect is likely to help them understand the world around them. At the museum, students are shown how to use human and material objects to gather the data they require.

Once students have completed their research at the museum, they should sort and analyse the data they have gathered to reach conclusions. This is the third step in the process and the beginning of the follow-up activities in class. By decoding, classifying and comparing information, students are encouraged to interpret and identify relationships between the data they have gathered. They can answer their own questions, verify their hypotheses and develop new conclusions.

These new conclusions are the focus of the fourth and final phase of the learning process and complete the circle of the educational project. During synthesis, students reorganize their data and present others with conclusions based on their research.

The process we propose integrates, both synchronically and diachronically, five series of interacting factors. It is based on an intellectual process (development of questions, data gathering, analysis and synthesis) of the object (interrogation, observation, appropriation) involving three steps (preparation, completion, and follow-up), three points in time (before, during and after the museum visit) and two locations (school and museum). It can be illustrated as follows:

Before	-	School	-	Preparation	-	Development of questions	-	Interrogation of object
During	-	Museum	-	Completion	-	Data gathering and analysis	-	Observation of object
After	-	School	-	Follow-up	-	Analysis and synthesis	-	Appropriation of object

Of course in practice, the development of questions carries over into the completion phase and continues at the museum; analysis is refined after the museum visit; and synthesis begins at the museum. This schematic diagram should not restrict the dynamics of the real-life situation. It does, however, give a visual presentation of a process that begins and continues at several levels. It brings together all the various elements of a learning situation that goes beyond the narrow confines of the school or museum. The intellectual process specific to the topic becomes the pivot.

Theme

The educational programs developed as part of our research are not limited to integrating an activity in a holistic process. They are also based on a theme ("Finding an approach that works") that flows from matching the collection of the specific museum with the school curriculum. The resulting program, then, is not designed for every school group, but for a specific group. For instance, the theme of the educational program at the Musée David M. Stewart was developed for ten-year old children because the collection corresponded to the school curriculum. It is therefore the "curriculum" that determines the choice of theme, taking into account the museum's collection.

Objectives

Our educational programs seek to achieve objectives that are both varied and limited. Let me explain what I mean by this. Learning is too often limited simply to knowledge of facts, knowledge that is then evaluated in terms of the student's capacity to memorize. But knowledge also includes the development of concepts and skills. Traditionally, educational programs at museums involved nothing more than a transmission of facts, events and dates. For all practical purposes, the educational programs in our project broaden the scope of the objectives. Thus, in the "Finding an approach that works" program used at the Musée David M. Stewart, the objective is to have students acquire some facts about the settlement of the first colonists in the Saint Lawrence Valley. But, we also wanted to have students develop concepts about such issues as migration and the century, as well as skills such as reading a time-line and a map. The program is thus designed to appeal to the intellect as a whole and is not concerned with evaluating simply the information provided by the museum guide or educator and the capacity of the student-visitor to memorize facts.

Our programs seek to achieve objectives that are not only cognitive in nature, but also affective, particularly in terms of attitudes. For instance, in the program established at the Musée David M. Stewart, we are trying to improve the attitude of students toward museums and toward the subject being taught. We are trying to reach the student in his entire being and not as a being

who is separated and divided. This open approach to learning has a liberating effect on the creative capacities of all participants and maximizes the influence of the student-visitor on the development of the educational program.

The multiplication of objectives should not lead to an uncontrolled growth of the notional concepts. Indeed, they should be limited. A museum guide normally tries to provide visitors with the greatest amount of information in the shortest possible time. But experience has clearly demonstrated that retention of such information is very poor, if not insignificant, and that anecdotal and incidental information distracts the visitor's attention. It therefore appears essential that we should lower the conceptual content of information in order to facilitate learning. It is the student-visitor's capacity to understand that determines the nature and quality of the information transmitted and taught.

Program Activities

1. Activities Preceding the Museum Visit

We tested various types of activities for preparing students for a museum visit. Three categories of preparatory activities were found to be effective as a result of our experiments. They deal respectively with basic requirements, the theme to be studied and the museum outing itself.

The first category of activities relates to basic needs, in other words the knowledge students require to be able to derive maximum benefit from a museum visit. First, they should have mastered the basic school program knowledge before dealing with the theme proposed for the educational program. Second, student should have mastered the basics skills relating to the museum activity, namely the knowledge abilities to interpret and understand what they see at the museum. For instance, to benefit from a museum visit, they must be able to read and understand exhibit labels, interpret a plan and analyze an item from different perspectives. At the very least, such basic information can be given in the form of preliminary remarks and not as the focus of specific activities.

The second category of activities, which are designed to provide an introduction to the theme, clarify the guidelines of the study. They act as a link between the objectives of the school program and those of the museum activity. They also make the students understand the need to visit the museum in order to continue their learning process. These activities correspond to an exploratory phase. In the classroom, students perform initial research on questions related to the theme. The activities should awaken the students' curiosity and interest so that they will want to pursue their data gathering at the museum.

The last category of activities to be planned prior to the museum visit concern the technical organization of the museum outing and are designed to prepare students for the data gathering process. Preparation for the outing may begin with a discussion of the definition of a museum and its major functions and continue with a presentation of the museum and its collections.

2. The Museum Visit

The museum visit can be handled in different ways. The most appropriate strategy will depend on the age of the students, the theme selected for study and the human and material resources available. There are many strategies that can be used successfully with student groups. In our experience, however, they should take into account several pedagogical principles.

Plan the museum activities

When a school group goes to a museum, you should plan original activities suited to that museum and avoid repeating those that can be carried out in the classroom. That does not mean that every educational strategy used in school should be banished from the museum; some strategies are not confined to either schools or to museums. It is a matter of adapting them by using the resources of the museum, and not asking the museum to take the school's place or vice versa.

Encourage data gathering

The museum visit is part of the data gathering phase. If the museum visit is seen as an integral part of a process that involves a preparatory and a follow-up phase, the information gathered at the museum can be used by the students when they return to class.

Encourage full student participation

Studies such as that of the Audio-Visual Association have shown that people retain only 20% of what they hear compared to 90% of what they say while doing something. For the museum visit, you should use strategies that involve every aspect of the student as an individual. If they are to benefit from the experience, they should participate as fully as possible.

Make it fun

Play is the principal activity of very young children and is still very important for school-age children. A museum visit which incorporates play activities will catch the students' interest and stimulate their motivation.

Plan some free time

Museum activities are often of short duration and some people believe students should always be kept busy. This is true to some degree, but time should also be set aside to allow the students to explore the museum on their own. They should be given the opportunity to discover the museum by themselves and make it their own. They will then linger to examine objects that have not been included in the educational program activities.

3. Activities After the Museum Visit

Once students have visited the museum, the data gathering phase is finished. To complete their learning process and derive every possible benefit from the museum visit, students should, when returning to class, begin to analyse and synthesize the information they have collected, and thus absorb the knowledge. The museum visit then becomes part of a continuous and permanent learning and educational process.

Analysis should provide students with an opportunity to compare and classify their data. After a brief review of the activities, they sort the data and set aside information that is uncertain or unrelated to the research. They then compare the data and identify obvious similarities and differences in various elements. The final step is to develop associations that group together and categorize similar elements.

The analysed data then become part of a coherent whole that allows the students to discover the answers to the research questions and to draw conclusions. This is the synthesis phase. During synthesis, students develop conclusions based on their research, prepare their reports and,

lastly, present their findings. In addition to helping students absorb the knowledge they acquired at the museum, the process of synthesizing and presenting results may also bring new issues to light and encourage students to pursue new research paths and reflect on new horizons.

Conclusion

What can we conclude at this stage of our research? The Research Group on Education and Museums has developed a first educational model for schools and related museums. But the work is not over. The model needs to be tested in others museums. We are trying to develop other models. Different studies are conducted. Among them, there is one on the concepts, another of the intellectual abilities, a third are on the historical perspective, a fourth one on the role of the different agents. Finally, we are initiating a new one on the use of microcomputers in the museums by teenagers students. A lot of work left to do. But all those studies on schools and museums can be useful to lie the fundamental bases of educational approaches useful not only for museum but for all the educational sites outside the school.

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* The asterix indicates that the work has been done by a member of the Research Group on Education and Museum or with the assistance and collaboration of at least one member of the Group.